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ABSTRACT

This paper describes "Reading by Patterns," a remedial tutorial program for young adults. The principal aim of instruction is to help students transform their normal fluency in speaking English into a parallel ability to read simple, printed English sentences and paragraphs. As the instruction progresses from the simple noun-verb-noun sentence pattern, successive units call attention to distinctive elements within main sentence parts and to the relationships and interdependencies of sentences within paragraphs. (AA)

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READING BY PATTERNS: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC REMEDIAL TUTORIAL PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The original idea for the psycholinguistic approach embodied in *Reading by Patterns* developed as I came to realize the enormity of the problems, at all grade levels in our schools, variously called word calling, or word naming, or barking at the page. It struck me forcibly that students so afflicted have literally learned only what they have been painstakingly taught—nothing else: letters, sounds, syllables, words. Other children somehow catch the trick of reading, but these unfortunates do not. Instead, they regard the task of reading printed English as the laborious identification of word after word in isolation, as in a list printed from left to right. Once a word has been more or less identified—called, named, or barked—the student moves across the white space between the words and attacks the next word. The internalized silent reading of such readers no doubt mirrors this procedure.

As I have noted elsewhere in my books and articles (1964a, 1968a, 1970), this procedure at best fragments English sentences and destroys the normal rhythmic and intonational patterns that hold sentences together and mould them into whole meaning-bearing units. One of the most grievous outcomes of this rhyth-des roying procedure, however, is that many students never learn to sound out words in this way at all. Instead, they stumble across one white space after another, desperately guessing at the connections of letters, sounds, and syllables, often failing miserably, word after word. They are so preoccupied with the tiniest bits of information on the printed page that they cannot possibly attend to the larger segments and structures required

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for successful decoding of whole messages (Compare Smith and Holmes 1971; and Weaver, 1967). Such reading cripples are unable to apply what they have only partially perceived through unsuccessful rote learning. They cannot, in short, even identify words successfully. It is of small help to such students to be advised to read with expression, or exhort to develop sentence sense. Their need of systematic instruction in how to decode whole sentences so as to derive meaning from the relationships of the main sentence parts to the entire message is painfully clear. *They need to be taught how to develop sentence sense.*

This program is a beginning toward that end. The full title—*Reading by Patterns: A Programed Guide to Reading Sentences and Paragraphs* (Lefevre, Lefevre and Shore, 1971)—emphasizes that the most significant meaning-bearing patterns in English are well above the levels of letters, sounds, syllables, and words. The principal aim of the instruction is to help the student transform his normal fluency in speaking oral English into a parallel ability to read simple printed English sentences and paragraphs. *This is the essential trick of successful reading.* It is the first step on the road to reading more sophisticated printed English. The unique, distinguishing feature of this approach is that it helps students decode and recode sentences in terms of main sentence parts (not parts of speech). But this is not grammar instruction. No verbal definitions of any kind are required; instead, a minimum of terms is used, learned gradually by association, repetition, imitation, and application. Thus the student learns to associate the main structural parts with the message of each sentence. The thrust of the entire program is to develop comprehension of messages conveyed through printed English sentences. As the instruction progresses, successive units call attention to distinctive elements within main sentence parts, and to the relationships and interdependencies of sentences within paragraphs.

This particular portion of the projected program focuses upon the N V N sentence pattern: Noun part, Verb part, completer. These simple terms are used instead of Subject and Predicate; or Noun Phrase and Verb Phrases; or Subject, Verb, Object; because Noun part, Verb part, and completer are simpler and more functional. Moreover, the N V N pattern is the basic English sentence pattern, and the most commonly used; many other English sentence patterns also have three parts, and this parallelism with other patterns is reinforcing and transferable. The authors also believe that a student who knows that no new pattern will be "sprung" on him has confidence enabling him to focus all his attention on the essential points throughout this program.

This approach to reading instruction has a psycholinguistic base. Very simply, the term *psycholinguistics* incorporates overlapping areas between psychology and linguistics. The main hypothesis underlying

this psycholinguistic rationale is as follows. *All thought that is distinctively human* (not shared by lower animals), *incorporating both cognitive and affective experience, is quite literally bonded to language: human thought and language* (which, in so far as it is a symbolic system rather than a system of signs, is a distinctively human attribute) *form an integrated whole. Distinctively human thought does not exist without distinctively human language.* I share this view with Sapir (1972), Fries (1945), Vigotsky (1961), and Pike (1964a and b), among others. Speaking, listening, writing, reading, and thinking, all are interrelated psycholinguistic processes. Reading English requires interpretation of printed English, which is ultimately based upon and derived from spoken English. In this sense, then, I define reading as a psycholinguistic process.

This program is also psycholinguistic in the sense that it offers disabled readers a fresh chance to come at reading, a method quite different from their previous attempts to attack letters, sounds, syllables, and words. By the time they reach the 7th grade, most ordinary students have been repeatedly exposed to a variety of word attack skills. This program offers them a chance to observe and practice the interrelationships among thinking, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Finally, and most importantly, it offers them initial success and repeated success after years and years of reading failure.

Brief Description of the Present Program

In developing this program, I have been ably assisted by Helen E. Lefevre and David Shore; Wendell W. Weaver has served as consultant on testing. Following is summary information from the cover page of *Reading by Patterns:*

Capsule statement:

This edition of READING BY PATTERNS is about the fifth generation in the development of this material; it is perhaps two thirds the estimated length of the present program. Portions of this material in various stages have already been tested by more than five hundred students in the Philadelphia area and in Georgia. It is currently being used in one-to-one tutorial experiences by undergraduate and graduate students at Temple University. The course is entitled Language and Reading Problems of Young Adults; it is designed for college students training to teach pupils in grades 7-12 whose reading levels are from 3 to 5 as measured by such standard tests as the Iowa or Stanford.

Programed instruction:

A unit is the smallest self-contained portion of the program; each unit consists of 9 to 16 frames requiring a response by the student. A student should always complete a minimum of one

unit per working session, but he may complete as many units as time and inclination allow.

Procedure:

The teacher, a well-trained tutor (or a good tape recording) reads the directions aloud to an individual student, who follows the directions visually as the teacher reads; since all parts of the program are read aloud to him, the student does not have to be able to read independently in order to perform the assigned tasks successfully. The visual "read along" experience is believed to be a major strength of this method. Each student uses a sheet of cardboard or manila paper to mask the frames he is not working on. As he completes each frame, he slips his mask down and exposes the next frame; if he chooses, he may go back to an earlier frame and repeat his work. The basic aim of every frame and every unit in this program is success for the student.

A word of caution. This linear program is conceived as a single strand in a comprehensive reading program; it is by no means intended to be a comprehensive reading program in itself. During the tutoring process, the simple language-comprehension learnings of this program may be applied directly to more complex language-comprehension problems in textbooks and other materials currently studied, as in social studies and science. Similarly, the language-comprehension elements may be less formally applied to motivating read-along experiences using high-interest materials for individual students. Students should also enjoy access and exposure to films, TV presentations, plays, and interesting oral readings either by professional readers, by the teacher, or by classmates. READING BY PATTERNS should be kept in perspective as a single strand of reading instruction having precise but limited objectives: it is not a comprehensive reading program. (See Lefevre 1964 and 1968 for comments on comprehensive programs.)

A Sampling of Reading by Patterns

Levels of reading difficulty

The first unit begins at the pre-primer level, yet this very first unit teaches the crucial concept that English sentence parts must be in the right order: Noun part first, Verb part second, completer third; English sentences must be written, read, and comprehended as unitary meaning-bearing patterns with the three main sentence parts in one, two, three order. The extreme simplicity of the first sentence has allowed every remedial reader who has tried the program to succeed in his very first effort. We feel that this initial success is of the utmost importance to students who have experienced nothing but reading failure for many years.

The level of difficulty progressively increases throughout the program, as the sentence parts become more complex, and as various elements of the more complex parts are sequentially called to the student's attention. To experience this program as the tutorial student experiences it, the reader of this article should provide himself with a mask, as described above under "Procedure"; and then advance deliberately from frame to frame, simulating the kind of concentrated attention that is required of the remedial reader. *At his level of reading competency, he is forced to think.*

The following examples include the complete revised worktext version of Unit 1; four selected frames from Unit 2; and the complete text of the concluding unit of this part of the program, Unit 54. These examples give a minimal representation required to illustrate the underlying psycholinguistic rationale of READING BY PATTERNS.

Unit One

1. Three words are printed below. Read them to yourself while I read them aloud.

saw
Robert
I

No answer needed.

GO ON TO #2

2. Do the three words in item 1 make a sensible sentence as I read them to you? (answer yes or no)

Answer here

THE CORRECT ANSWER IS NO

3.

saw
Robert
I

These three words can be written as a sensible sentence. Can you do it? Write the sentence now on the line below

(1) I (2) SAW (3) ROBERT

The sentence, "I saw Robert" makes sense because the *sentence parts* are in the right order: 1, 2, 3; or first, second, third. That is what right order means.

4. Let's try a new sentence with the *sentence parts* printed below. Read them to yourself while I read them aloud.

him
(3. completer)

called
(2. verb part)

The teacher
(1. noun part)

No answer needed

GO ON TO #5

5. You can write a sensible sentence by writing the sentence parts in #4 in the right order. Start with the noun part, the ? . Write the noun part on the line below.

1. The

THE TEACHER

6.

him (3. completer) *called* (2. verb part)

What sentence part would you add after *The teacher?* Answer below.

The teacher

THE TEACHER CALLED

7. What sentence part would complete the sentence?
The teacher called

THE TEACHER CALLED HIM

8. Read your answer to #7. Did you write the three sentence parts in the right order? (Yes or No)

YES

9. *The teacher called him* makes sense because the sentence parts are in the right order. The *noun part* comes: (a) first; (b) second; (c) third (choose one answer)

FIRST

10. *The teacher called him.* The *verb part* comes: (a) first; (b) second; (c) third

SECOND

11. *The teacher called him.* The *sentence completer* comes: (a) first; (b) second; (c) third

THIRD

12. In a sensible sentence, the sentence parts must be in the right _____?

ORDER

Unit Two (selected frames and commentary)

Unit 2 advances from Unit 1 in two principal ways: it introduces markedly longer sentence parts; and it introduces a frame in which the student must choose among three Noun parts, three Verb parts, and three completers.

Following are the first two frames of Unit 2:

1. In Unit 1 we made sentences by writing the three sentence parts in the right order. A new set of three sentence parts is printed below. Read them to yourself while I read them aloud.

was watching
(2. verb part)

A very tall policeman
(1. noun part)

the long parade
(3. completer)

No answer needed

GO ON TO #2

2. Let's begin our sentence with the *noun part* from #1. Write it below.

A VERY TALL POLICEMAN

Frames 3, 4, and 5 follow the same procedure as in Unit 1.

Below is a new kind of problem requiring the tutorial student to make careful choices among nine sentence parts. Three sets of sentence parts are constructed so as to be error-proof, provided the student follows the right order of sentence parts. But because the student does not know that the problem is error-proof, he works diligently to make intelligent choices. He thinks.

6. A larger group of sentence parts is printed below. Read the sentence parts to yourself while I read them aloud.

(1) Noun parts	*(2) Verb parts*	*(3) Completers*
His brother	hit	the wall
Your car	bumped	my arm
My motor bike	scratched	his truck

No answer needed

7. You can write the sentence parts in #6 in the right order to make sensible sentences. Choose one noun part from #6 and write it on the *first* line in the box below.

(1) _____ (2) _____

(3) _____

HIS BROTHER *or* YOUR CAR *or* MY MOTOR BIKE

Frames 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 follow the same procedure as before, reinforcing the concept that to make sense, the three main parts of a sentence must flow together in the right order.

Units 3 through 54 deal with more involved sentence parts, and with successively more detailed attention to significant signals and markers within sentence parts. The first simple paragraph is presented in Unit 16. The first fifty three units all deal with various elements of sentence structure as they relate to communicating the total messages conveyed by simple sentences and paragraphs. Unit 54, how-

ever, deals entirely with comprehension of meaning, with no attention to structure whatsoever.

Unit Fifty-four

Unit 54 is the final unit of READING BY PATTERNS in its present form, it is the culmination of nine units dealing with various aspects of a single paragraph. It is doubtful that even a skilled reader at this reading level could answer these questions successfully without having worked with some, possibly all, of the eight sequential units leading up to it.

1. The paragraph that we began working with is reprinted below. Read it to yourself again while I read it aloud. Use it to help answer the questions that follow.
   1) A burning tropical sun baked the flat, empty, arid plain. 2) Many different animals surrounded the quiet shaded water hole. 3) A brace of powerful lions approached the inviting oasis. 4) Both big cats began drinking its cool water. 5) Several giant water buffaloes joined these great cats. 6) Neither thirsty lion seemed to notice these heavy-horned new neighbors. 7) No other wildlife joined the dangerous animals at the pond. 8) Most other species try to avoid mature lions. 9) Few animals will approach any full grown water buffaloes.
2. From reading this paragraph you know that around the waterhole there were: (a) only a few animals; (b) a lot of different kinds of animals; (c) some men and some animals.

A LOT OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANIMALS

3. Which two types of the animals around the waterhole were the *most* dangerous?

LIONS AND WATER BUFFALOES

4. The different animals came to the oasis: (a) to meet the other animals; (b) to get a cooling drink; (c) to find food.

TO GET A COOLING DRINK

5. The oasis is probably located: (a) in a cold damp jungle; (b) in a hot dry desert; (c) in a wet steaming swamp.

IN A HOT DRY DESERT

6. The oasis is probably: (a) hotter than the rest of the desert; (b) the same temperature as the rest of the desert; (c) cooler than the rest of the desert.

COOLER THAN THE REST OF THE DESERT

7. The water buffaloes that approached the waterhole were probably: (a) smaller than most animals; (b) as large as most animals; (c) much larger than most animals.

MUCH LARGER THAN MOST ANIMALS

8. The water buffaloes were much larger than most animals because they are described as ?

GIANT

9. Most of the animals didn't approach the waterhole while the lions were there. Most of the animals probably: (a) weren't thirsty; (b) were tired; (c) were afraid of the lions.

WERE AFRAID OF THE LIONS

10. One species of animal that is not afraid of lions is the ?

WATER BUFFALO

11. We know that the water buffaloes were not afraid of the lions because: (a) they approached the lions; (b) they avoided lions; (c) they fought the lions.

THEY APPROACHED THE LIONS

12. From reading this paragraph, you know that: (a) all of the animals drank together; (b) the most dangerous animals drank first; (c) the fastest animals drank first.

THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMALS DRANK FIRST

READING BY PATTERNS has been successfully used by remedial readers who speak both standard and non-standard American English dialects. Their ability to answer correctly the relatively difficulty questions in Unit 54 is illuminated by an important experimental finding:

> the use of pattern practice techniques can sharpen students' awareness of structural matters in such a way as to improve their comprehension of material that they read (Lin, 1965).

READING BY PATTERNS applies this insight directly and systematically to developing comprehension of sentences and paragraphs.

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